

billion. (Israel and Egypt remain among the top recipients of U.S. foreign aid.)

What were known as the Camp David Accords scarcely addressed other aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Arab leaders condemned Sadat for neglecting the needs and hopes of Palestinians and expelled Egypt from the Arab League, an organization founded in 1945 to serve the common good of Arab countries. In 1981, Sadat himself was assassinated by militants.

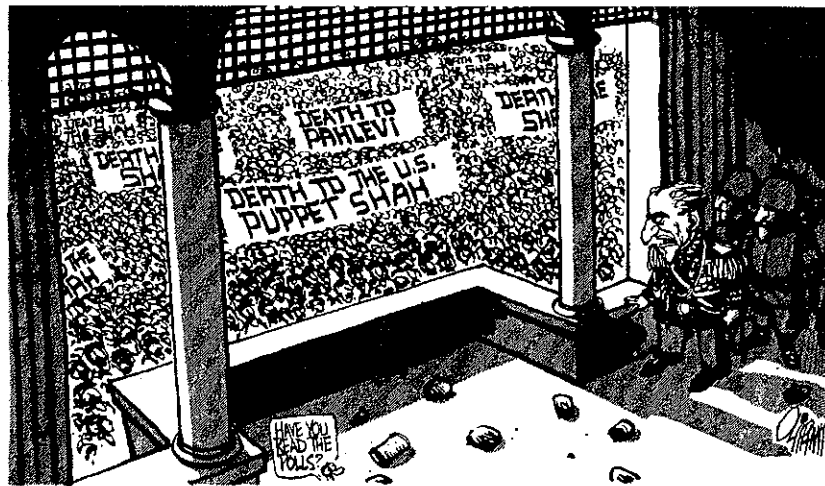
How did the Camp David Accords affect the position of the Soviet Union in the Middle East?

The Camp David Accords brought Egypt securely into the U.S. camp in the Middle East. At the same time, countries who opposed the treaty, such as Syria and Iraq, moved further into the Soviet camp. To counter the Soviets, U.S. officials placed greater weight on their relations with other long-time friends in the region.

Aside from Israel, the United States counted on close ties with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Turkey was linked to the United States through membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The United States also provided Turkey with ample foreign aid. The Saudis, while they opposed Israel and U.S. support for Israel, continued to rely on U.S. firms to market their oil exports and invest their profits.

The United States and Iran

At the same time as many conflicts in the Arab-Israeli relationship were heating up, the United States was also trying to strengthen its relationship with Iran in order to oppose the Soviet Union. The United States was bound



"Of course I'd resign if I thought that they really meant it."

Pat Oliphant. Copyright 1979. Universal Press Syndicate.

to Iran and its shah, or king, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, by political, military, and oil interests. The shah was tied to Washington through his own complicated past. In 1953, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) led a coup against a nationalist prime minister who threatened the shah's power and wanted to bring the foreign oil industry under state control. At the time, Pahlavi was a weak and inexperienced ruler. Over the next two decades, U.S. support boosted his confidence and ambitions.

By the early 1970s, Pahlavi imagined that he could rekindle the greatness of ancient Persia in modern Iran. To celebrate the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian Empire, he spent at least \$100 million to host a lavish banquet that featured a 165-person catering staff from Paris and 25,000 bottles of French wine. The rise in oil prices in 1973 permitted the shah to increase his spending on other items as well, particularly on weapons. By the mid-1970s, Iran accounted for half of U.S. arms exports.

How did U.S. policy makers fail to understand the Iranian people?

Both Pahlavi and U.S. policy makers underestimated the anger simmering just below the surface of Iranian society. The shah's efforts to modernize Iran's educational system and redistribute land sparked protests among the country's Islamic clergymen because the

changes threatened their ideology and power. His push toward industrialization forced millions of peasants to abandon the countryside. Iran's cities were soon overcrowded, and the gap between the rich and the poor widened. Additionally, rampant corruption in Pahlavi's government and the brutal role of SAVAK (the secret police) in suppressing dissent also increased opposition to his rule. Nevertheless, the United States offered full support to Iran in order to counter Soviet support of other Middle Eastern nations.

“Iran, because of the great leadership of the shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled regions of the world.”

—President Jimmy Carter, 1977

Who led the opposition movement?

Islamic clergymen were in the best position to encourage resistance to the shah's regime. They emerged at the helm of a broad opposition movement that included democrats, nationalists, and communists. In 1978, they began organizing demonstrations against the shah. The shah responded with force, ordering the army and police to smash the protests. In September, they opened fire on a huge crowd in Tehran, Iran's capital, killing or wounding as many as two thousand demonstrators.

Pahlavi, suffering from cancer, facing hostile public opinion, and losing support from the military for his repressive policies, lost the ability to hold on to power. In January 1979, he left the country. Two weeks later, the spiritual leader of Iran's Islamic movement, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, returned to Iran from exile in France.

What were the goals of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini?

Khomeini wanted to transform Iran into his vision of a pure Islamic state. His revolution aimed at purging the country of Western popular culture. He prohibited movies and music from the West. He banned alcohol. He

also ordered women to cover themselves from head to toe when in public.

Khomeini branded the United States as the “great Satan.” (He referred to the Soviet Union as the “lesser Satan.”) When Carter permitted Pahlavi to enter the United States for medical treatment, Khomeini claimed that Washington was plotting a counterrevolution. In November 1979, Iranian university students seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran. For over a year, they held the U.S. embassy staff as hostages. Carter's attempt at a military rescue failed, leaving eight U.S. troops dead. The U.S. Cold War policy for Iran had clearly failed.

“Our relations with the United States are the relations of the oppressed and the oppressor.”

—Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

How did the Iranian Revolution affect the world oil market?

The Iranian Revolution touched off another panic in the oil market. Before the Revolution, Iran had been the world's second largest oil exporter (trailing Saudi Arabia). By the end of 1978, the foreigners who managed much of Iran's oil industry had been evacuated and Iranian oil exports had ground to a halt. Again prices soared, nearly tripling in a few weeks.

The Iran-Iraq War

In September 1980, Iraq's leader Saddam Hussein hoped to take advantage of an Iranian army weakened by revolution to seize a disputed waterway spilling into the Persian Gulf. He also wanted to prevent the spread of Iran's Islamist revolution elsewhere in the Middle East.

Saddam Hussein aimed to deliver a quick knockout blow, concentrating on Iran's oil facilities. Instead, Iraq's invasion stalled. Iran counterattacked but lacked the strength to defeat Hussein's impressive military. For the next eight years, the war seesawed back and forth. Iraq had an advantage in air power, missiles, and chemical weapons. Saddam Hussein also

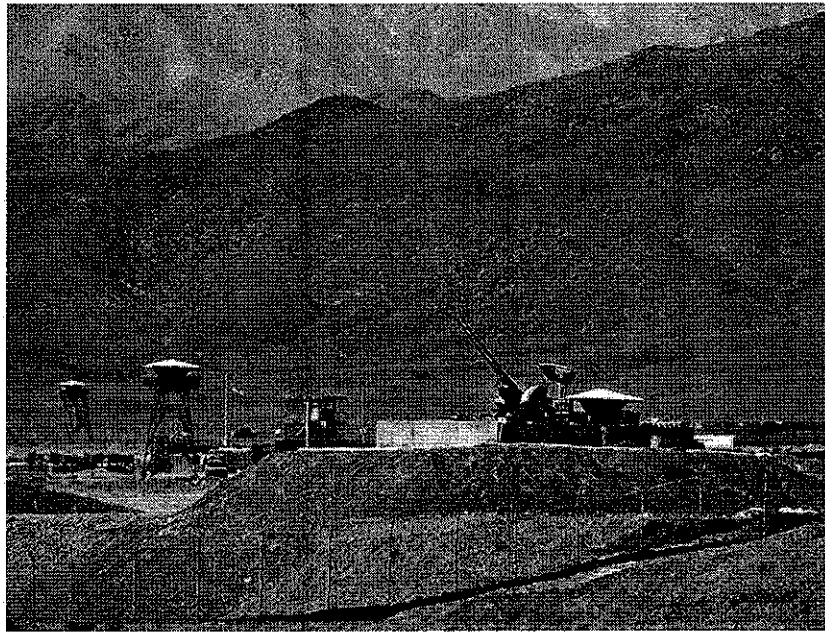
politics, heightened by the failure of U.S. officials to find any WMD. The Iraq War will continue to play an important role in the debate about the U.S. role in the Middle East, including how it deals with the country of Iran's nuclear program.

■ Iran

The United States government worries that Iran has a program to develop nuclear weapons. The Iranian government denies it is developing weapons, but claims that as a signer of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) it has the right to develop nuclear materials for peaceful purposes. (All countries that have signed the NPT are allowed to acquire equipment, materials, and knowledge for peaceful purposes.) The dilemma for the international community is that it is difficult to distinguish between "good atoms" for peaceful purposes and "bad atoms" for military purposes.

How has the world responded to Iran's nuclear ambitions?

In a move supported by Washington and Europe, Russian officials proposed supplying Iran with fuel for its nuclear power plants that could be used only for peaceful purposes. Nevertheless, in 2009 Iran admitted that it had a secret uranium enrichment plant. In 2011, a UN report stated that Iran's nuclear program could have a military dimension. These events have heightened concern around the world. France, Germany, and the United Kingdom have negotiated closely with Iran to encourage it to end its nuclear program. Iran's hard-line president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has staunchly defended Iran's right to a nuclear energy program. His hostile language towards Israel has also heightened international anxiety about Iran's intentions.



Anti-aircraft guns guarding the Natanz nuclear facility, Iran.

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"Iran does not have a right to nuclear military capacity, and we're determined to prevent that. But it does have a right to civil nuclear power if it reestablishes the confidence of the international community that it will use its programs exclusively for peaceful purposes."

—Secretary of State Hillary Clinton,
July 15, 2009

In 2010, Iranian nuclear enrichment facilities sustained damage from a sophisticated computer virus, known as Stuxnet. The origins of the virus are unknown, but some experts believe that Israel and the United States were behind the attack. In addition, several key Iranian nuclear scientists have been assassinated in Tehran.

How has Iran changed since the Revolution of 1979?

The Iranian Revolution that first set off alarm bells has lost much of its fire. The reelection of a moderate, Mohammad Khatami, as president in 2001 with nearly 60 percent of the vote indicated that Iranian voters wanted



Photo courtesy of M. Ravanipour.

In mid-2009, hundreds of thousands of Iranians protested the results of the presidential election. Although the government tried to limit international press coverage, Iranians used cell phones and computers to upload video and photos of the protests to the internet.

to reform the Iranian Revolution. Khatami campaigned for tolerance, social reform, and a greater role for women in public life—a platform that appealed particularly to youth and women. But in February 2004, Iran’s clerics disqualified many liberal reform candidates from running for parliament. Many Iranians chose to boycott the 2004 election in protest of the government’s action.

Public demonstrations calling for reform and criticizing Iran’s clerics became more common.

“I would not be surprised if we see more of such protests in the future because the ground is ready. Our society now is like a room full of gas ready to ignite with a small spark.”

—Anonymous member of Iran’s Parliament, June 2003

The presidential election of 2005 turned Iranian politics on its head once again. The election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a conservative who supports the system of ruling clerics, took the wind out of the sails of the reformers. Ahmadinejad ran on a platform that focused on stamping out corruption and providing aid to the poor.

Why was the 2009 presidential election in Iran significant?

In 2009, Ahmadinejad stood for election for a second term as president against Mir Hossein Moussavi, a reform candidate, and two others. Ahmadinejad claimed to have won with 62 percent of the vote. The result surprised Moussavi’s supporters as well as international observers who expected victory for Moussavi or at least a closer election. Protestors took to the streets and claimed that Ahmadinejad and the ruling clerics had stolen the election by falsifying the vote count. Throughout Iran, hundreds of thousands took

part in demonstrations to protest what they regarded as a “stolen” election.

The government responded with force, leaving scores of marchers dead and thousands in jail. The Iranian government has admitted to torturing prisoners in the aftermath of the demonstrations. The decision by Ayatollah Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran, to declare the election fair and his denunciations of the protests have further undermined the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of many.

“Death to the dictator.”

—Protest chant directed at Ayatollah Khamenei, September 2009

While the United States will continue to focus on Iran and Iraq, a broad long-lasting conflict presents another critical security challenge for the United States.

Resolving the Arab-Israeli Conflict

The Arab-Israeli peace process has commanded a large share of the United States’ diplomatic energy over the years. For the past two decades, the United States has played an important role in mediating the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. In addition to playing host at negotiating sessions, the United States exerts influence through foreign aid and diplomatic pressure. Israel has long been a leading recipient of U.S. foreign aid. Arab-Israeli peace is important to the United States today because of the long history of friendship with Israel, because U.S. leaders see it as a way to reduce regional instability and conflict, and because Israel provides the United States with a powerful ally in an important region.

What is the U.S. perspective on relations with Israel?

Since its creation, Israel has occupied a special position in U.S. foreign policy. U.S. leaders have stood by Israel for several reasons. Israel has won the admiration of many in the United States as a model of democracy

and Western values in the Middle East. Presidents Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson were particularly committed to Israel’s struggle for survival.

Other presidents, such as Richard Nixon and George H.W. Bush, viewed Israel primarily as a strategic ally in the region. They valued Israel for countering U.S. enemies in the Middle East, battle-testing U.S. weapons, and sharing intelligence information. Israel’s development of nuclear weapons (which Israeli officials have never admitted) with French help gave Israel added weight in U.S. policy.

In recent years, U.S. support of Israel has attracted fresh attention. Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians under its jurisdiction has drawn intense criticism from around the world. For instance, the Israeli government has limited Palestinians’ daily travel to work and elsewhere through checkpoints at the boundaries. The Israeli government built a barrier to separate the Gaza Strip and Israel in the mid-1990s, and is constructing a barrier more than four hundred miles long to separate the West Bank and Israel. U.S. support for Israel has not wavered, even though it has been a source of resentment in the Arab world.

“America’s strong bonds with Israel are well known. This bond is unbreakable. It is based upon cultural and historical ties, and the recognition that the aspiration for a Jewish homeland is rooted in a tragic history that cannot be denied.”

—President Barack Obama, June 4, 2009

What have been the major successes and failures of recent peace negotiations?

Over the last twenty years, negotiations to end the Arab-Israeli conflict have moved forward in fits and starts. At times, talks have produced positive outcomes. For example, the United States brokered peace talks between Israel, the Palestinians, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon in 1991. As a result of the negotiations, Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty in 1994 in which Jordan joined Egypt in officially recognizing Israel. (Mauritania is the only other